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CAPITOL SPOTLIGHT
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MILITARY SPENDING MUST BE CUT

I have joined with other members of Congress in launching an effort to reduce military spending.

I have a number of strong reasons for seeking a reduction in military expenditures.

First of all, I am convinced that the defense budget is bloated with waste and corruption. Far too many contracts are awarded with a minimum government effort to make sure that taxpayers are getting their money's worth. A national television exposé recently pointed to the huge amounts of money charged to the taxpayers by contractors for travel, lavish entertainment, and a host of other expenditures remote from our defense needs.

During the last two years, the Reagan Administration has harshly reviewed and criticized every domestic program. Even the smallest faults were used to justify the elimination and reduction of valuable programs. It is high time the programs which cost us billions of dollars in the defense field receive comparable critical attention.

Second, with all due respect, I cannot go along with those congressmen who insist greater military spending is a cure for unemployment. The jobs created by military spending are at the high end of the skill continuum. The aerospace industry hires primarily engineers, scientists, and technicians.

Our severe unemployment problem lies in precisely the opposite area from that covered by military spending. The highest rates of unemployment are now found among such unskilled and semi-skilled workers as in the auto industry, steel mills, and coal mines. It is simply dishonest to argue that the out-of-work people in the auto industry in Michigan will benefit from military spending in Texas.

Third, I do not concur with the theory that the vast spending on arms will help contain communism in underdeveloped nations. El Salvador is faced with the threat of a takeover by the totalitarian Left because a selfish, autocratic ruling elite has alienated so much of the peasant population. It is hardly surprising that communism makes headway in a country where a handful of families control nearly all the land and wealth.

.....MORE.....MORE.....MORE.....

In most of the underdeveloped world, both humanitarian and strategic interests require the United States to give agricultural, health, and economic assistance--rather than continuous arms shipments.

Fourth, money saved from wasteful defense spending is desperately needed for our languishing domestic programs. It is not true that there is "no money" to sustain programs such as job training, maternal and neonatal care, and a host of other programs of proven value that have been cut by the Reagan Administration.

Let me state explicitly that I favor a strong national defense. After what has happened in Afghanistan and Poland, it is clearer than ever that the Soviet Union is a dangerously militaristic and belligerent power. We have a responsibility to ourselves and our allies to maintain a top-notch military establishment.

Looking at the votes across the country in favor of a nuclear freeze, it is clear to me that Americans would like to see a negotiated detente with the U.S.S.R. I believe most Americans would also like to see the improved domestic programs and reduced taxes which can result from a prudent and responsible reduction in our current defense budget.

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